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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Previously presented) A method for preparing a functional polymer, the method comprising:

terminating a living polymer chain with a functionalizing agent where the functionalizing agent is defined by the formula

$$Z\text{-}R^4\text{-}\alpha$$

where Z is a leaving group or an addition group, R^4 is a bond or a divalent organic group, and α is a sulfur-containing heterocycle selected from the group consisting of thiirane, thietane, thiolane, thiazoline, dihydrothiophene, thiadiazine, thioxanthene, thianthrene, phenoxathiin, dihydroisothiazole, and thienofuran group or substituted form thereof.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cenceled)

7. (Previously Cancelled)

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where Z comprises a halide, a thio alkoxide group, an alkoxide group, a dialkyl amine group, a nitrile group, a Schiff base, a ketone group, an aldehyde group, or an ester group.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

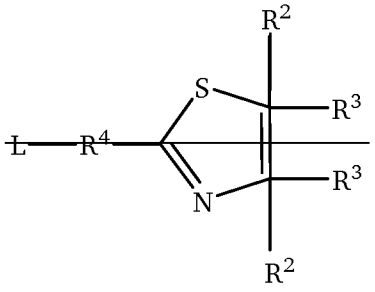
12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where the polymer chain is a rubbery polymer having a Tg that is less than 0°C.

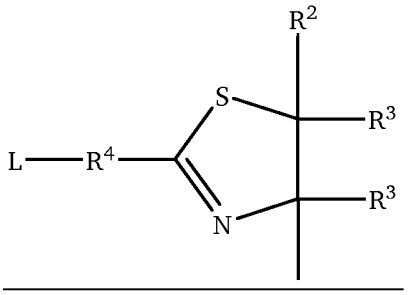
13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where the polymer chain is polybutadiene, polyisoprene, poly(styrene-*co*-butadiene), poly(styrene-*co*-butadiene-*co*-isoprene), poly(isoprene-*co*-styrene), or poly(butadiene-*co*-isoprene).

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, where the functionalizing agent is defined by the formula

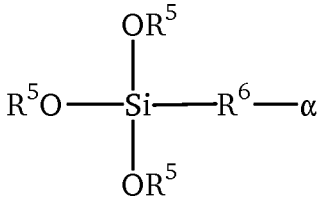




where L is a leaving group, R^4 is a bond or a divalent organic group, each R^2 is independently hydrogen or a monovalent organic group, and each R^3 is independently hydrogen or a monovalent organic group or where each R^3 combine with each other to form a divalent organic group.

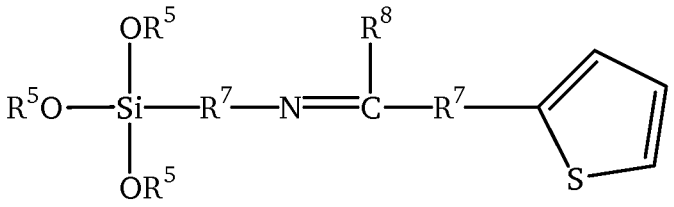
17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, where the functionalizing agent is selected from the group consisting of 2-methylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-ethylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-propylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-butylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-pentylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-hexylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-heptylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-dodecylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-phenylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-benzylthio-2-thiazoline, 2-chloro-2-thiazoline, 2-bromo-2-thiazoline, 2-iodo-2-thiazoline, 2-dimethylamino-2-thiazoline, 2-diethylamino-2-thiazoline, 2-methoxy-2-thiazoline, 2-ethoxy-2-thiazoline, 2-(N-methyl-N-3-trimethoxysilylpropyl)-thiazoline, and 2-methylthio-1-aza-3-thia-bicyclo[3-4-0]-nonene.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where the functionalizing agent is defined by the formula



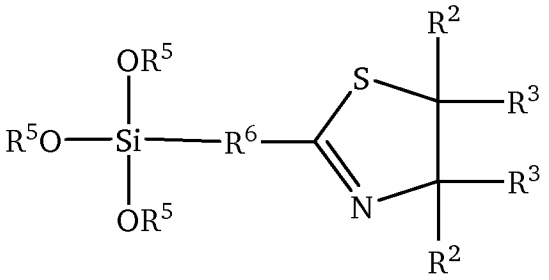
where α is a sulfur-containing heterocycle selected from the group consisting of thiirane, thietane, thiolane, thiazoline, dihydrothiophene, thiadiazine, thioxanthene, thianthrene, phenoxathiin, dihydroisothiazole, and thienofuran group or substituted form thereof, each R^5 is independently a monovalent organic group, and R^6 is a bond or a divalent organic group.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18, where the functionalizing agent is defined by the formula



where R^5 is independently a monovalent organic group, each R^7 is independently a bond or a divalent organic group, and R^8 is hydrogen or a monovalent organic group.

20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where the functionalizing agent is defined by the formula



where each R^2 is independently hydrogen or a monovalent organic group, each R^3 is independently hydrogen or a monovalent organic group or where each R^3 combine with each other to form a divalent organic group, each R^5 is independently a monovalent organic group, and R^6 is a bond or a divalent organic group.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 2, where the functionalizing agent is selected from the group consisting of 2-(N-methyl-N-3-trimethyoxysilylpropyl)thiazoline, 2-(N-methyl-N-3-trimethyoxysilylpropyl)thiophene, 2-(N-methyl-N-3-trimethyoxysilylpropyl)thiazole, and the reaction product of 2-thienyl carboxaldehyde and aminopropyl trialkoxysilane.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Cancelled)